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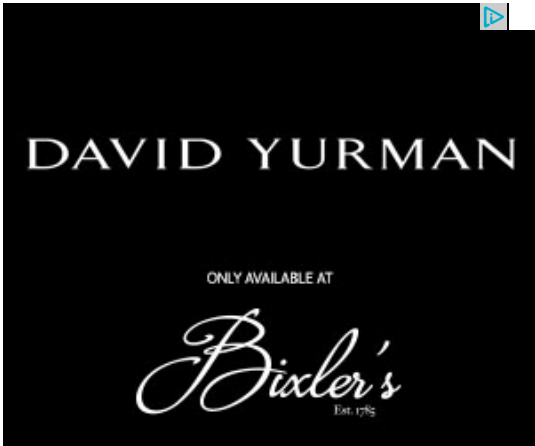
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# Dunmore landfill accepting gas drilling waste that may be radioactive



BY STEVE MCCONNELL (STAFF WRITER) / PUBLISHED: FEBRUARY 20, 2011

DUNMORE - Keystone Sanitary Landfill in Dunmore has accepted tons of gas drilling waste that can contain radioactive material and heavy metals, according to documents obtained by The Sunday Times.

Environmentalists raised red flags about the practice, but industry and state officials said it posed no public health risk.

At least four natural gas companies have received approval from the landfill to dump "drill cuttings" - deep underground rock and soil removed during the drilling process

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along with chemical additives. Cabot Oil and Gas, Chesapeake Energy, Chief Oil and Gas and Stone Energy are identified in the documents, obtained through a Right to Know request to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The documents were submitted by Keystone Sanitary Landfill manager Joe Dexter in a report to DEP last summer. Multiple efforts to contact Mr. Dexter, including a visit to the site by a reporter Friday, were unsuccessful.

The landfill accepted at least 17,710 tons of the material over a six-month period from July through December, mostly from Cabot Oil and Gas, according to DEP records.

The documents show Chesapeake Energy was approved to dump drill cuttings at Keystone as early as November 2009, including from multiple Marcellus Shale wells in Auburn Twp., Susquehanna County.

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The drill cuttings, which gas company officials say are benign and environmentalists claim contain a stew of chemical additives, are an economic boon for Keystone, which had an average daily volume of 4,000 tons of waste accepted in 2010.

The landfill is owned by Dunmore businessman Louis DeNaples. Keystone also accepts sludge from municipal wastewater plants, asbestos and other products containing PCBs, and a medley of residential and commercial waste.

The new trash stream has come from Marcellus Shale wells as close as Susquehanna County, where horizontal drilling and gas production has kicked into high gear. One completed Stone Energy natural gas well in Rush Twp. produced 630 tons of drill cuttings that made its way to Keystone Sanitary Landfill last year.

One Marcellus Shale well can produce as much as 1,000 tons of drill cuttings, Cabot spokesman George Stark said, as drill bits bore more than a mile vertically and horizontally beneath the ground through several geologic layers to reach the gas.

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Keystone is among a growing number of landfills throughout the state that are taking the cuttings as gas companies move away from on-site burial, which is allowed under state law as long as drill cutting pits are lined and covered in plastic.

"We're hoping to develop that side of the business," said John Hambrose, spokesman for Alliance Sanitary Landfill in Ransom and Taylor. "It happens that we haven't received any yet. We're always looking to increase our volume."

Mark Carmon, a DEP spokesman, said landfills are allowed to take the drill cuttings under their general municipal waste permit, but must abide by special regulations for the material. Regulators also examine its chemical composition on a "well pad by well pad basis" to determine if it is safe for disposal, Mr. Carmon said.

Keystone also has radiation monitors in place that would detect if drill cuttings contained unsafe levels.

"We are sensitive to the concern. That's why there are a lot of controls on these facilities," Mr. Carmon said. "We are not seeing any problems at all. If we did, they wouldn't be able to accept it."

He added there has been no indication of any issues at Keystone with the material.

Landfills cannot accept wastewater from gas drilling, the toxic mixture of fracking fluids and underground substances produced after a well is hydraulically fractured.

"Wastewater would have to be either recycled or go to a (wastewater) treatment facility," Mr. Carmon said.

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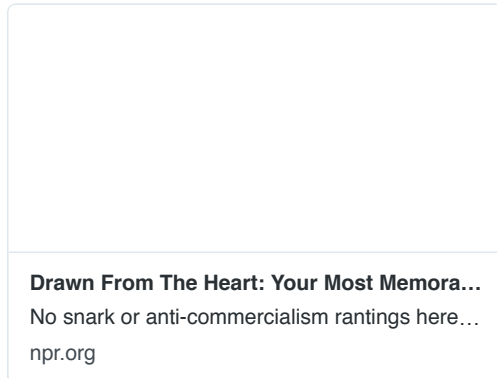
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**Sarah Scinto**

@sscintoCV

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Gas industry officials say the move to deposit drill cuttings in landfills is part of a "closed loop" approach that attempts to mitigate environmental impact and reuse some materials.

"Chesapeake utilizes a closed-loop drilling process that eliminates the need for drilling (disposal) pits throughout the Marcellus," Brian Grove, a company executive based in Towanda, wrote in an e-mail. "This process separates drill cuttings into steel bins that are taken off-site for disposal in approved regional landfills."

Mr. Grove said the process reduces the footprint of a well site since a disposal location is not needed and works better with sites that have multiple gas wells that produce thousands of tons of drill cuttings.

Mr. Stark, of Cabot, and Chief spokeswoman Kristi Gittins said all of their companies' drill cuttings are now being disposed of in landfills, including Keystone. The companies are drilling extensively in Susquehanna County.

The drill cuttings are considered residual waste, a category removed from household waste, Mr. Carmon said. DEP chemists decide whether a toxic substance can be safely deposited in a municipal landfill, testing its reactivity to other substances, among other procedures.


"This is not an issue," Mr. Carmon said. "We're talking about rocks. If there was going to be a consistent problem setting off these (radiation) monitors, it wouldn't be worth it for the landfills."

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Not everyone agrees.

Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of Delaware Riverkeeper, an environmental advocacy group, said drill cuttings contain a host of "dangerous chemicals," other substances found deep underground including arsenic and mercury, and naturally occurring radioactive materials that may present environmental and public health risks, even in a landfill.

"Everything that is in that (underground geologic) formation is going to be in those cuttings," Ms. Carluccio said. "We may be seeing the buildup of radioactive and other hazardous materials in landfills."

Glenn C. Miller, Ph.D., an environmental chemist at the University of Nevada, said judging the potential environmental harm of drill cuttings is difficult in part because gas companies refuse to disclose the additives used during drilling, claiming the information is proprietary.


Dr. Miller said it is also less understood how harmful the naturally occurring radioactive material in the Marcellus Shale rock can be, considering that its intensity can greatly differ depending on the location of a well.

"Exactly what the risks are, I think they are still evolving," he said. "It's not well-defined."



Contact the writer: [smcconnell@timeshamrock.com](mailto:smcconnell@timeshamrock.com)

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**TheGuvnr** • 6 years ago

And Dunmore continues to love Uncle Louie even though he dumps radioactive waste in their town. But they won't stand for a methadone clinic or a morgue!!!!

There is something in the water in Dunmore....and it just might be coming from Uncle Louie's landfill...

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**scranton** • 6 years ago

"but industry and state officials said it posed no public health risk"

And we KNOW they are always correct and do things only in the public's best interest.....

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**The\_White\_Rabbit** → scranton • 6 years ago

Problem is you have State Senators like Scarnati and Solobay taking a paid travel and ticket to the Superbowl complements of Consul Energy, Inc. This Marcellus drilling company is one of the major drillers in NE PA and recipient of at least one of those taxpayer funded intelligence reports (coal and gas) on the activities of the activists in PA.

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**The\_White\_Rabbit** · 6 years ago

Real nice that the public was not informed about this till the newspapers brought this out! There are landfills in other parts of the state where at least the public is notified and there are public meetings. If this is problem wait till this material is used for "beneficial reuse" for abandoned mine reclamation like proposed in Hazleton.

Chief, it is not the added chemicals creating the elevated radioactivity but the marine formations drilled through and in the Marcellus formation that have naturally occurring higher values than the normal geologic formations closer to the surface.

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**Ted Rendell** · 6 years ago

Gas drillers will mix fracking fluid (Wastewater would have to be either recycled or go to a (wastewater) treatment facility," Mr. Carmon said.) with saw dust and now it is considered solid waste so the landfill can accept it a such. Moretorium Now so we can regulate this raping of our communities by out of state gas companies.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



**Guest** · 6 years ago

hey dunmore chief is the company that wants to put a gas compressor station near the dallas school district. If they don't care about harming children, they care about you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

3 ^ | v · Share ›



**TheProspector** · 6 years ago

All ground and rock around us is radioactive to some degree. The landfill already accepts radioactive waste from contractors in the form of bricks, concrete and the like. That's why they already have geiger counters at the gates -- to make sure that radioactive waste WHICH POSES A PROBLEM, is

kept out. Carluccio is simply spreading more fear. There is probably more radioactivity in his granite countertop than in a load of cuttings. Remember, science can be useful in combating fear.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



**The\_White\_Rabbit** → TheProspector · 6 years ago

That is what was expressed TheProspector as the elevation over normal "background" levels. Seems like science should address this concern with DATA not PR BS.

4 ^ | v · Share ›



**xboxershorts** → TheProspector · 6 years ago

NORM classified material that is brought to the surface is not subject to any stricter regulation than any other NORM material. You should read PA's regulatory statute regarding NORM (naturally occurring Radioactive Material). When drill cuttings bring up the framboidal pyrite that permeates throughout these dark shale formations that are being drilled for gas, it is much much more concentrated than it would ever be should it ever work it's way naturally to the surface. I am not a geologist, but I am certain the geologists at Cornell and now the University @ Buffalo would not be publishing these findings if they were unfounded. You seem to be too ready to dismiss the findings of scientists we the people commissioned to study this stuff. I wonder if you have some kind of financial interest in the Marcellus gas play?

2 ^ | v · Share ›



**bobash** → TheProspector · 6 years ago

It would be interesting to find out how much flyash from cogeneration plants have been deumped not only in local landfillsbut also in mine reclamation plants. The Scientific American reported a couple of years ago that ash from cogeneration plants and other coal fired plants produce ash more radioactive than low level wastes generated at nuclear power plants. The only problem is the nuke wastes goes to repositories for disposal, whereas the ash from the cogen/coal plants is "Beneficial" , go figure. Another example of political science trumping real science.

^ | v · Share ›



**scranton** · 6 years ago

The water company has a reservoir right near the base of Mount St. Louie, does it not?

2 ^ | v · Share ›



**awiseone** · 6 years ago

....and Dunmore still pays taxes. Taylor and Throop are laughing at you, Dunmore.

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